



APRIL IS MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD – CARING FOR OUR FAMILIES

“When our Sailors and Marines deploy, our families are the foothold. We at Navy Medicine believe that not only do our warriors serve; families serve as well.”

Vice Admiral Adam M. Robinson Jr., MC
Surgeon General of the Navy

BACKGROUND:

April marks the Department of the Navy’s observance of Month of the Military Child. An important aspect of caring for our warriors is also caring for their families. Family readiness is a key to maintaining mission readiness.

First Lady Michelle Obama stated at the Joint Armed Forces Officers Wives Club annual luncheon that “We cannot forget that military kids also serve in their own special way. They’re just like any other child in this country - except their lives are turned upside-down every time their mom or dad is gone halfway around the world, risking their lives so that all our children can enjoy the freedoms of our democracy.” She added that as a result, military children often experience higher levels of anxiety and a higher risk of depression than their non-military classmates, and a tougher time focusing at school. Mrs. Obama emphasized that we can never forget just how much these wars affect our military kids and that we all have an obligation to ensure they have the support they need at home and at school. She said she will continue to make it a priority to ask all Americans to join in supporting military families.

Navy Medicine supports our Sailors, Marines and their families by helping to build resilience and to increase psychological health through our program called ‘**Project FOCUS**’ (Families OverComing Under Stress).

Project FOCUS:

- FOCUS is a family-centered resiliency training program based on evidenced-based interventions that enhance understanding, psychological health and developmental outcomes for highly stressed children and families.
- FOCUS has been adapted for military families facing multiple deployments, combat operational stress, and physical injuries in a family member. FOCUS has demonstrated that a strength-based approach to building child and family resiliency skills is well received by service members and their family members. This is reflected in high satisfaction ratings.
- Notably, program participation has resulted in statistically significant increases in family and child positive coping, and significant reductions in parent and child distress over time, suggesting longer-term benefits for military family wellness. In June 2009, the Office of the Secretary of Defense Child and Family Policy determined FOCUS as a best practice program and requested BUMED support to expand Army and Air Force sites for services.
- To date, over 81,000 service members, spouses, children and community providers have received services from FOCUS.
- More information regarding Project FOCUS can be found at: www.focusproject.org

Talking Points:

- Our Patient and Family Centered philosophy and approach is not only our mission; it is the bedrock of the Navy medical system – it our bottom line.
- Providing comprehensive medical care for our Families who faithfully support our military is our duty, our honor and our privilege.
- Those children who have a parent deployed in military service to our country or recovering from injury at home need dedicated resources and support to thrive.
- The Military Health System and its partners provide unique programs and services to support the health and well-being of military children and our families.